

Monday, January 28, 2008

**Board Members Meet to Discuss Two WMATA Metrorail Accidents**

**November 30, 2006 WMATA Yellow Line Accident  
near Eisenhower Ave. Station**

On Wednesday, January 23, The National Transportation Safety Board met to determine the probable causes of two Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Metrorail accidents that resulted in three employee fatalities, and called on WMATA to tighten rules governing wayside worker safety.

On Sunday, May 14, 2006, a southbound WMATA Metrorail Red Line subway train struck and killed a Metrorail employee as the train was about to enter the Dupont Circle station in Washington, D. C. The employee was an automatic train control system mechanic who had been working with two other mechanics at the interlocking just north of the Dupont Circle station. All three mechanics had moved between the two main tracks north of the interlocking in order to stay clear of a northbound train that was leaving the station. As the southbound accident train was arriving, the other two mechanics remained in the clear between the two trains as they passed and were not injured. According to signal system data logs, the southbound train was moving about 40 mph as it traveled past the interlocking.

The Safety Board determined that the probable cause of the Dupont Circle accident was the failure of the automatic train control system mechanic to stay clear of the approaching southbound train either because he was not aware of the presence of the train or because he lacked a physical reference by which to identify a safe area outside the train's dynamic envelope.

On Thursday, November 30, 2006, a northbound WMATA Metrorail Yellow Line subway train struck and fatally injured two Metrorail employees who were performing a routine walking inspection of main track near the Eisenhower Avenue Metrorail station in Alexandria, Virginia. The accident occurred as the northbound train was traveling about 35 mph along track normally used for southbound traffic.

The Safety Board determined that the probable cause of the Eisenhower Avenue accident was the failure of the train operator to slow or stop the train until she could be certain that the workers ahead were aware of its approach and had moved to a safe area.

Contributing to both accidents were WMATA Metrorail right-of-way rules and procedures that did not provide adequate safeguards to protect wayside personnel from approaching trains, that did not ensure that train operators were aware of wayside work being performed, and that did not adequately provide for reduced train speeds through work areas. Also contributing to these accidents was the lack of an aggressive program of rule compliance testing and enforcement on the Metrorail system.

As a result of these accident investigations, the Safety Board made recommendations to WMATA regarding wayside worker protection, compliance of WMATA safety rules, and technologies for wayside worker protection.

**NTSB Assists in British Airways Accident at London-Heathrow**

**British Airways B777-236ER, Flight 38**

On January 17, 2008, British Airways flight 38 from Beijing, China, a Boeing 777-236ER equipped with Rolls Royce Trent 895 engines, landed short of runway 27 left at Heathrow International Airport, London, England. The 136 passengers and 16 crew members deplaned by using the emergency slides. A total of 1 major and 9 minor injuries were reported. While the aircraft was stabilized on approach to the runway, the autothrust system commanded an increase in thrust from both engines. The engines both initially responded, but after about 3 seconds, the thrust of the right engine reduced. Some 8 seconds later, the thrust reduced on the left engine to a similar level. Although the engines did not shut down and both engines continued to produce thrust at an engine speed above flight idle, it was less than the commanded thrust.

Safety Board investigators Bill English, Carol Horgan, and Steve Magladry launched later the same day to London as the U.S. Accredited Representative and Technical Advisors, respectively, to support the United Kingdom's Air Accidents Investigation Branch (AAIB) investigation of this accident. Also on the U.S. Team are representatives from the FAA and Boeing. The U.S. team is currently working with the AAIB, Rolls Royce, and British Airways in their examination of all possible scenarios that could explain the thrust reduction and continued lack of response of the engines to throttle lever inputs. The teams are also conducting a detailed analysis and examination of the complete fuel flow path from the aircraft tanks to the engine fuel nozzles.

U.S. air carriers operate a total of 128 Boeing 777 aircraft. Of those aircraft, 54 are equipped with Rolls Royce Trent engines, including eight aircraft operated by Delta Airlines and forty-six aircraft operated by American Airlines.

## Chairman Rosenker Addresses Highway Safety



*Chairman Rosenker gets a briefing on the latest Hybrid technologies*

On January 22, Chairman Mark Rosenker kicked off Media Day at the 2008 Washington, D.C. Auto Show, by delivering a speech that emphasized the importance of continuing advancements in automobile safety technology. The Chairman noted that there are nearly 250 million vehicles registered in the United States; their operation results in 6 million police-reported crashes and more than 42,000 fatalities annually. "For several decades, the number of fatalities has been dropping, and more importantly, the fatality rate has also been dropping. These improvements can be attributed to the use of seatbelts and child restraint systems; the development of airbags, antilock brakes, crash-absorbing vehicle frames; and campaigns to reduce drunk driving."

However, the decreases in fatalities and injury rates have leveled off in recent years. "So, while we have accomplished much in the past decade to improve the crashworthiness of automobiles, we have reached some practical limits in combating the physical forces involved in crashes. In recognition, the auto industry is moving beyond crash mitigation and into a new era where technology will help us prevent accidents."

Prior to addressing the Auto Show, Chairman Rosenker delivered the keynote address at the 2008 United Motorcoach Association Expo in San Francisco on January 17. The Chairman encouraged the industry to partner with federal regulators and embrace technological innovations that can prevent accidents. "It is time to implement safety improvements that provide crash mitigation and bridge the gap to the future, by entering a new era where safety technology will also help us prevent accidents," said Rosenker.

Calling the development of enhanced vehicle safety technologies "one of the most encouraging developments in transportation safety in a very long time," Rosenker cited electronic stability control, and systems that provide drivers warnings to prevent lane departures and imminent collisions as among the technologies that, if implemented, have the potential to further improve motorcoach safety.

Rosenker also emphasized the importance of crash testing to help federal regulators and the industry better understand crashworthiness issues. Lauding the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration for its first crash test of a full size motorcoach into a rigid barrier in December 2007, Rosenker said that crash testing is "a major step forward for motorcoach safety and occupant protection research," and is something that the Safety Board has advocated for decades.

*Chairman Rosenker delivering the keynote address at the 2008 UMA Expo*



## Vice Chairman Addresses Transportation Safety Groups



*UAA in NTSB Board Room*

During the first full week of January each year, 50 to 60 students from University Aviation Association (UAA) member institutions converge in Washington, DC, for the UAA Aviation Policy Seminar. The students and faculty facilitators spend the week visiting with industry associations, Congressional staff, and FAA managers to learn or gain a better understanding of how these leaders interact in establishing policies.

Prior to receiving a tour of the NTSB materials lab, the students gathered in the board room where Jeff Marcus (SRA) explained the Safety Board's mission and provided a detailed look into the accident investigation process.

Vice Chairman Sumwalt discussed the Safety Board's history through an in depth timeline of its predecessors and highlighted the importance of conducting an independent accident investigation.

"When transportation accidents occur, it is imperative that we be able to reassure the public that the Government is conducting honest, competent, timely, thorough, and unbiased investigations."

## NTSB Represented at Transportation Research Board

Each January, more than 10,000 transportation professionals from around the world—including representatives of federal, state, and local government agencies; universities; and industry—gather in Washington, D.C., to participate in the world's largest forum designed specifically for the formal and informal exchange of information among transportation researchers and practitioners. Approximately 3,000 presentations, including more than 1,500 peer-reviewed technical papers, are given throughout the week of this gathering. In addition, more than 200 TRB standing committees and numerous subcommittees hold open meetings to discuss current research and identify research needs.

This year's university consortium of students met at the Palomar Hotel in Washington, D.C., where the Vice Chairman presented an overview of the Safety Board and discussed the industries rising call for young experts as he reflected on the growing number of Safety Board employees eligible for retirement in the upcoming years. Currently, of the 366 full-time, permanent employees, 64 are eligible to retire (17%) immediately. Over the next 5 years an additional 75 (20% of current total) employees will be eligible for retirement.

The university consortium included: University of Tennessee, Vanderbilt, University of Kentucky, Georgia Tech, Georgia State, University of Florida, University of South Florida, UNC at Charlotte, NC State, and North Carolina A&T.

## Member Hersman Addresses AAA Gathering



Member Hersman participated in AAA's celebration of the 30th anniversary of the first child safety seat law, which was approved by the legislature in Tennessee in January, 1978. The event took place on January 17 in Washington, and it featured a display of 392 car seats and booster seats, representing the 392 children who survived car crashes in 2006 because they were in child safety seats. In her address to the gathering, Member Hersman noted the culture change that has taken place across the country regarding car seats during the past 30 years. She contrasted the general practices of transporting small children in cars during the 1970s, when cars were much less safe for passengers and car seats were not widely used, to the way children are typically restrained in child safety seats when they are being transported in cars today. Elaine Weinstein provided the information for Member Hersman's address and accompanied her to the celebration. Also representing the Board at the event were Stephanie Davis and Bridget Serchak.

## Hector Casanova Retires from Texas Office

Earlier this month, Hector Casanova retired after 16 years with the NTSB, and a total of 38 years of federal service. He was honored at a luncheon at NTSB Headquarters. Hector had served as the Regional Director of the NTSB's South Central Regional Office in Arlington, Texas, since 2003. Prior to that, he served as a Field Air Safety Investigator, a Senior Air Safety Investigator and a Supervisory Air Safety Investigator, in the Texas office, since 1991, when he began his employment with the Safety Board. Mr. Casanova has investigated over 600 aviation accidents and served as Group Chairman of three major investigations. He has also participated in numerous international accidents as the U.S. Accredited Representative, and serves as the Board's main liaison with aviation and accident investigation authorities in Central and South America. Prior to his employment with the NTSB, Mr. Casanova served with distinction as an Army aviator, first as a combat helicopter pilot in Vietnam, then as logistics and VIP pilot in airplanes. He plans to volunteer his efforts to educate and invigorate the Hispanic Community in the upcoming Presidential election.



*OAS Director Tom Haueter presents Hector Casanova with an honorary plaque*

## RPH Welcomes New Employees



Pictured from left to right are Wayne Workman, Dennis Mogan, Bob Chipkevich and Chairman Rosenker. Wayne and Dennis are new members of the RPH Staff, as they are sworn in by Chairman Rosenker in the Chairman's office on January 22. Mr. Workman will be working in RPH-10 out of the Atlanta office, and Mr. Mogan in Chicago. They both bring more than 70 years of railroad experience to the RPH-10 team.